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WHAT IS RELIGION?

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HENRY S. PRITCHETT

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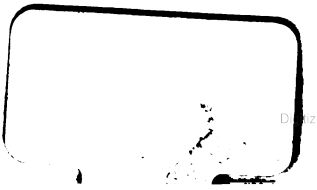

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

AND

OTHER STUDENT QUESTIONS

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

AND

OTHER STUDENT QUESTIONS

Talks to College Students

By HENRY S. PRITCHETT

PRESIDENT MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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To

The students whose friendship and fellowship form the inspiration of a college president's life

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PREFACE

THE enormous change which has taken place during the last generation in the attitude of educated men toward the questions of formal religious authority and tradition is nowhere so evident as in the generation now entering manhood. The college student of to-day has not in most cases had the formal religious training which his father received. He lacks the intimate knowledge of the Scriptures which all well-trained boys of the last generation had; traditional authority means less to him and he has grown up in an intellectual atmosphere in which the scientific generalizations of the last fifty years form a part of the every-day philosophy of life.

He is not less religious than his father was at his age nor less ready to think of service and of noble things; but there are

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fewer influences in his life to draw his attention to those everlasting questions which have to do with human aspirations and human destiny. His life is less rich in the things which create a religious sense. His danger is the same as that which confronts the American in all business life: that the pressure of the commonplace and the utilitarian may crowd out the thought of the larger and deeper questions of philosophy, of religion, and of service. However narrow may have been the theology of the last century, the religious training which went with it brought continually before men's minds the things which are spiritual and eternal. In the adjustment of men's thoughts to the changes of the last half-century much has been done to impair the influence of the religious leadership which comes from systematic teaching and formal church organization. No one can be brought into close contact to-day with large bodies of students

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— alert, clear-minded, enthusiastic young men — without a deep sense of the lack in their lives of spiritual and religious influences. They are not less quick to respond to such influences than their fathers; but the old traditional voices of authority no longer appeal to them, and in the hurry of modern life the things which are tender and deep and spiritual seem to have less and less opportunity to be considered in comparison with the pressing occupations of the present. Men's souls are overwhelmed by the great current of the commonplace, the material, the utilitarian, and the student is in that current. If his attention and his interest are to be drawn to higher things it must be through a leadership which faces frankly the philosophy of his time and which deals with the facts of science and of religion in a spirit of intellectual sincerity. No cold and formal rationalism will suffice, but a leadership which shall be tender, hopeful, spiritual,

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and fearless; in a word, a religious leadership, but one free of dogma. Whence such a leadership is to come is one of the difficult questions which to-day confronts the church and humanity.

The addresses here brought together arose out of questions coming to the front in the day by day college life. They were talks to different groups of students at various times and places, sometimes before a whole class, sometimes before smaller bodies. There are throughout expressions of a somewhat personal bearing, sentences addressed *ad hominem*. These have been left unchanged in the printed form, since they serve to explain, in a measure, the circumstances under which the talks were given.

H. S. P.

December, 1905.

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I

WHAT IS TRUTH?

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WHAT IS TRUTH?

"Truth is within ourselves: it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all
Where truth abides." BROWNING.

I WELCOME these meetings where, as members of a brotherhood, we discuss frankly some of the larger philosophical ideas which interest the whole world. And this not simply for the reason that they bring me into a face-to-face relation with you, but also because these discussions serve to remind us that college life is a part of the life of the world, and not a life isolated from it.

To-day I wish to speak to you concerning the relations of citizens to each other and concerning the guiding principle which ought to govern men, in order that these relations may be the best, not only for the

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individual, but for the State as well. And in the outset I remind you again that college education, if it be really an education, ought to count in preparation for life, and that the college and the life you lead in it is a part of your life in the world.

You will find, both in college and in that later life of which it is the beginning, that with larger opportunity and larger acquaintance you will be called upon to deal in greater and greater measure with questions which concern your social, political, and moral relations with other men.

In what way, may I ask, does your education in science help to the adjustment of these relations, and is there in the study of science that which serves to fix a guiding principle of life and of conduct?

I believe that there is such a principle in the studies which you pursue. I go even farther and say frankly that, if your scientific studies furnish you no suggestions in these matters, if your education here does

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not connect itself with any philosophy of life and of conduct, if it has not strengthened your moral purpose and helped also to clear your conception of truth and of duty, then you have caught only the husks of science, the grain has slipped through your fingers; you have acquired, not education, but training.

But in what way does scientific education minister to the right interpretation of our duties in the social order in which we find ourselves?

Let us consider for a moment how the society which we know has come to exist, and how the characteristics of the individuals who compose it have been formed. For although, as Marcus Aurelius says, man is a social animal, nevertheless he became such only after a long and painful history, and he brought into the social order characteristics developed by ages of experience under different conditions.

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Our knowledge of man goes back to a period far distant, when he was a solitary animal; when he fought day by day with other men and with the beasts of the field for life itself. Gradually men became gregarious, the family was merged into the tribe and the tribe into the nation, until, in the fullness of this twentieth century, all civilized mankind are bound together by ties of common interest and of common sympathy.

Primitive man lived in complete freedom. He concerned himself with no thoughts of others. He recognized no responsibility for others. But, as society was slowly established, the individual accepted certain limitations of his freedom for the sake of the common good. He assumed certain responsibilities which the social order entailed. As time went on the relations became more complex, and the lines of influence between man and man were enormously multiplied. Primi-

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tive man could be influenced at most by the one or two fellow-savages whom he met in his solitary wandering. The man who influences you or me most strongly may come from the other side of the world. Modern life has become exceedingly complex. No man lives to himself. In one way or another he may influence the lives of a thousand men.

In a society so constituted, made up of human beings who still retain the desire of individual liberty, in whom the long struggle for existence has implanted in each the passion to do the best for himself, how may the social order be maintained and individual freedom and individual efficiency be preserved? And in what way does a study of science minister to the maintenance of these relations?

My answer to the question is this: The scientific method of study is characterized rather by a distinctive attitude of mind toward truth than by any new ma-

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chinery for collecting facts. The scientific method insists that the student approach a problem with open mind, that he accept the facts as they really exist, that he be satisfied with no half-way solution, and that, having found the truth, he follow it whithersoever it leads.

To my thinking, the course which conserves at once the social order and the freedom of the individual is to be found in a knowledge of the truth by the individual citizen. And this knowledge of the truth in our social relations is to be had by use of the same method which we employ in seeking for scientific truth. I believe that the value of the citizen is measured by his ability to know the truth and to use it, and that his freedom is limited by this same ability. I am convinced that the process by which we acquire this ability is the same whether the truth we seek refer to questions of science or to questions of morals. Science says to those who love

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her, Know truth and follow it. In so doing you serve best your fellow-men and yourself.

But I can understand the questions which such statements immediately raise in your minds. In science, you say, one can know the truth. In the chemical or in the physical laboratory one can compare theory with exact tests, and know whether his results be true or not; but one has no such criterion for judgment in social and moral questions. How is one to know the truth in such matters in order that he may follow it?

In the days of the Roman emperors the procurator of a certain conquered province in Asia Minor found before him two parties, each of whom claimed to represent the truth. On the one side were the religious leaders of the province, earnest, narrow, confident that they were the divinely appointed guardians of truth. On the other side stood one accused by them

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of impiety, unbelief, and disregard of the law. But when the accused spoke, his plea for truth was so noble and so earnest that it aroused the attention of even the careless and reckless procurator; and, as he looked in bewilderment from one to the other, he asked, half helplessly, "What is truth?"

I can well imagine that many of you, coming as you do from distant homes to a strange city, taking up as you must new duties amid new surroundings, find yourselves constantly in the presence of new conceptions of duty concerning these matters of every-day life. Some of the things which you have been taught to look upon as wrong you find done by those in whom you have confidence. Some of the things which you do are not in accord with the views of your companions. And as you observe this difference of opinion concerning those things which men consider right in their relations with other men, I can well

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imagine you must now and then ask yourself the question, What is truth and where am I to find it?

Now, I do not pretend to be able to tell you where the truth is. Perhaps my position is somewhat like that of the small Swiss whom I met on top of the Gemmi Pass, and of whom I asked the question, "Where is Kandersteg?" "I don't know," said he, "but there is the road to it." And although each of us finds truth for himself, if he find it at all, nevertheless I may be able to point out some things which will mark the way to it, whether you take one path or another.

In order that a man may reach truth, and having reached it make it effective, at least two qualities are necessary. One is what we call moral sense, earnestness of purpose, desire to do that which is true. The other is intellectual clearness, the ability to think. And the result which a man accomplishes is in large measure a

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function not of one but of both of these qualities.

You have in mechanics a formula for the momentum of a moving body. This momentum depends both upon the mass of the body and upon its velocity, and is equal to the product of the mass by the velocity. The momentum of a man in the social order in respect to truth is represented by a similar formula. His efficiency equals the moral purpose multiplied into the ability to think straight.

The world's history is full of the story of men who had one of these qualities and who failed by lack of the other. It is difficult to say which has done the greater harm — blind devotion which would not see, or intelligence which saw, but lacked purpose and moral courage. Each has at one time or another filled the world with crime and suffering.

The scene to which I have just referred furnishes an illustration of both these

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cases. The Jewish priests who clamored for the death of the Nazarene were no doubt in earnest in their belief that they represented truth, but they lacked the clearness of vision to recognize what truth was. Pilate, on the other hand, educated as a Roman knight, a man who knew the world, intellectually alert, saw clearly that this man who stood before him was no criminal, that his words had extraordinary depth and significance. In a weak way he sought to turn aside the judgment of the priests, but his lack of moral purpose made this effort fruitless in the face of the earnestness, perverted though it was, of the scribes and the Pharisees.

And so, although no man can point out to you the way of truth, although that path is one which each one of you must find by his own effort, to walk in this path you will require not only moral earnestness, but intellectual clearness. One must not only feel right, he must think straight;

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he must have not only sentiment, but sense.

But you will say that even those who unite moral purpose with intellectual alertness, those who appeal both to conscience and to intellect, even those men do not agree in their attitude concerning what is true in moral and in social questions. These differences among honest, high-minded, and intelligent seekers after truth are discouraging and puzzling to the beginner.

We have had in the daily press recently an illustration of such difference of view in a discussion concerning what is usually called the drink question. Now, no earnest and no clear-headed man can fail to recognize the misery and the crime which go with the misuse of alcoholic liquors; but the discussion to which I refer brought forward at least three distinctive opinions as to the way in which this abuse should be dealt with.

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One group of men believed that all social drinking is wrong, and that such drinking should be prohibited by law, as other crimes are prohibited. A second group held that, while wine-drinking is in itself harmless, nevertheless the danger of misuse is so great that all good men ought to abstain from wine and discountenance its use by others. A third group took the ground that the question was one for each individual to settle for himself; that truth required the admission that a large number of those who drink wine use it in a rational way; that temperance and truth lie along the same path; that the real lesson which mankind has to learn is the lesson of self-control and of rational living.

It is not my purpose to discuss any of these views, all of which have been earnestly and conscientiously maintained. But the point to which I wish to call your attention is this. The question whether you accept one or another of these views

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is of comparatively small importance; but it is of infinite importance to you that, in these and in similar questions, you find your own conception of the truth, as conscience and mind direct; and, having reached a result, that you have the courage to follow that conception whithersoever it leads. It means little for you to accept my view of truth or any other man's view of truth. It means everything to you to determine out of an open heart and an alert mind your own conception of truth, and, having done this, to keep the courage of such conviction. And if your training in science is to have any deeper meaning, if it is to connect itself not only with the problem of making a living, but also with a real philosophy of life, then the habit of open-mindedness which you have been trained to use in science, this scientific method, as it is called, is also the attitude of mind in which you should approach all questions.

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There is a feeling that too much truth is not a good thing, at least for men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four. And sometimes, when one's conceptions of truth, particularly in social and moral questions, lead directly across the conventional and traditional lines, one is tempted to ask whether, after all, it is not better to fall in with the view of other men and travel their road. All men of serious purpose, whether their lives be passed in the public view or not, face this question at one time or another; for all men who have earnestness and intelligence become leaders in greater or less degree. In such a moment of hesitation there is one voice which speaks down the centuries — the voice of one greater than Marcus Aurelius, greater than philosopher or poet or priest, whose utterance is so clear and so straightforward that it brings courage to doubting souls and shows the way for timid hearts. That voice says, "Know the truth, and the truth shall make

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you free." My brothers, there is no freedom worth the having other than that freedom which a man enters into when he follows truth as his own heart and his own mind enable him to see it. Know the truth, and, as the Master says, it shall make you free: free from discouragement and free from fear. For the real dragons that destroy men's souls are not food and drink, but the weakness which allows passion to become the master, not the slave, of the mind; the selfishness which sees only personal interest and personal gain; the mental lethargy which accepts error rather than seek truth; the lack of vision which fails to recognize the truth; the lack of moral purpose to follow the truth when it is seen; and the fear which turns aside or renders powerless the noblest purpose and the finest conception.

There is another quality of the mind which ought also to enter into one's attitude toward truth, and which is character-

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istic of the scientific spirit and of the scientific method? This quality is tolerance. For how strong soever one feels himself to be in purpose, and how sure soever he may consider his conception, other men just as sincere, possibly as able, will discern truth in a different direction and approach it by another path. No man, no party, no sect, and no religion has a divine monopoly either of truth itself or of the ways by which truth may be found. History is full of the story of those who parted, the one from the other, each to follow truth as he saw it, to find that their divergent paths came, in the end, to the same destination.

A steamer which sails from San Francisco for Yokohama sets her course when she leaves the Golden Gate to follow the arc of a great circle, and plows her way sturdily, straight on through storm or sunshine to her destination. A sailing vessel setting out from the same port will sail first on one tack and then on another, and her path will be

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determined by the winds and currents. Yet each sails by the same compass and each comes in the end to the same port.

It is in some such way that men with different training and different equipment arrive after all at the same truth by widely different paths, and after different expenditure of time and labor. The personal equation enters into our judgment of truth as it does into all human thinking. It is no part of the scientific teaching to deny to another the same freedom in the search for truth which he himself claims. The scientific man of all others should be tolerant.

This does not mean that the scientific method excuses a man for his failure to use all the means in his power to come at the truth. It does not forgive a man when he seeks in a devious way that which he ought to reach by a direct road. It does not hesitate to criticise a man who embarks on a sailing vessel when he ought to go by

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steamer. And above all it boldly opposes that which it conceives to be false.

The principle that free expression of opinion is conceded to those who differ from the recognized authorities is a lesson which individuals and parties, societies and nations, have been slow to learn. This right, so far as social, political, and religious questions are concerned, is limited to-day by curious social and geographic lines. It is the boast of our Anglo-Saxon stock that political and religious freedom has found its fairest fruitage in Anglo-Saxon civilization. We who live under a régime which guarantees to each citizen freedom of thought and of speech do well to recall now and then the mistakes and the difficulties through which our fathers came to learn this lesson. It is a story full of the weaknesses and of the strength of humanity; a story of progress step by step, with many halts and backward steps; a story of cruelty and of devotion, of the blindness of the many and of

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the clear vision of the few; but a story always of human progress toward truth.

For the desire to compel other men to accept one's own view of truth has been confined to no class and to no age. It has been a very human characteristic since the days when men lived in caves and dressed in skins. Kings and priests, having had most power in their hands, have had most opportunity to use the argument of force. Mahomet found that the sword was the surest argument to convert a stubborn convert, and doubtless he was thoroughly honest in his belief. The priests who crucified Christ felt no doubt of their devotion to truth. A few centuries later those who called themselves followers of Christ found in their hands the power to persecute men for their opinions, and they did not hesitate to use it. As the Rev. John Cotton, in his controversy with Roger Williams, naïvely asserted, persecution is not wrong in itself. "It is wicked," said he, "for

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falsehood to persecute truth, but it is the sacred duty of truth to persecute falsehood," and that teaching bore strange fruit for New England soil.

Boston Common, scarce a stone's throw from this room, lies to-day white and fair under last night's snowfall. As we look upon it our memories go back to the days of 1775, and to those later scenes which preceded the Civil War. We think of Boston Common as sacred to liberty and to freedom and to the rights of man; and I believe there is no spot on earth more truly dedicated to human freedom. Yet it has beheld other scenes than gatherings of indignant colonists or groups of patriot citizens anxious for their country's future. Our thoughts seldom go back to that October morning in 1659, when William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and Mary Dyer were led out on Boston Common, to be hanged for teaching the doctrines of the Quakers. It is not easy for us

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at this day to realize that men and women could be hanged on that free soil for rejecting the doctrine of original sin and of the resurrection of the body, for denying the efficacy of baptism, and for asserting the absolute right of private judgment. And I remind you of this scene, not to compare our liberality with the narrowness of our fathers, but to call your attention to the fact that by their very earnestness of purpose and by their examination and discussion of religious questions the fathers found the path to truth, though long and rough; persecution gave way to tolerance, and a colony founded to perpetuate a special view of divine truth became a State where any man may follow truth as his own heart and his own mind direct. And this ideal is, after all, that toward which great souls have labored in all ages. For this scientific method is no new invention of the nineteenth century. The men who have led humanity have always been those who

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went forward with open hearts and with clear minds. For literature and science and politics and religion are not separate and distinct things, but only different parts of the same thing; different paths by which men have sought after beauty and truth and righteousness — and these are one.

Therefore let me hope that your study of science may mean something more to you than the facts of chemistry and of physics, which you learn in the laboratory. And, if I may be remembered by you when you have left these halls, I should choose to be remembered as one who taught you to approach the problems of your duties and relations with men in the same spirit in which you approach a problem in the laboratory — to be content with no lie, to rest in no evasion of the truth; to work out, with the help of a tender conscience and an alert mind, your own conceptions of truth, and having reached such conceptions, to follow them. And this is the

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answer to my question. We know truth when we reach it of our own effort and make it our truth. The politics and the religion which a man inherits, without thinking and without effort, count little toward his political and his spiritual development. Men differ, and will always differ, as to what truth is in this or in that matter, but that man finds truth who seeks it; he serves truth who follows it fearlessly; he serves his fellow-men who does all this with humility and with tolerance.

In the Church service of to-day is preserved a short prayer: "Grant us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come the life everlasting." It has come down to us from one of the heroes of the early Church, him whom men called the golden-tongued; one who, after a life of devotion and of courage and of tolerance, died at the hands of ignorance and jealousy. The words of this prayer, few

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and simple as they are, seem to me to ask all that a human soul can ask — in this world knowledge of God's truth, in the world to come the life everlasting. The educated man, the courageous man, the tolerant man has no other prayer.

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II

WHAT IS RELIGION?

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers. — ST. PAUL.

THE most significant thought in all the universe is the idea of God and of our relation to Him. And yet I suppose there is no other fact of fundamental importance to which we bring so little of our individual thinking. Most of us accept our conceptions of God and of this relation exactly as our fathers handed them down to us; and if we begin to think for ourselves about them our very first feeling is one of unfaithfulness and of disloyalty to the religion of our fathers.

You have come from religious homes. Some of you have come for the first time to share the complexities of a city life. You are being trained under a system of

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thinking whose fundamental condition is intellectual sincerity. In your scientific work you are taught to question any result and to prove and test it. It is impossible that this training should not have its influence upon your religious ideals if you think at all about such matters. A man said to me, some time ago, "I send my boy to a scientific school because I feel that here neither his religion nor his politics will be affected." I want to say to you that such a school does not exist, or, if it does exist, it ought not. A school whose intellectual current is so feeble that it does not set an intelligent man to thinking about his relations to God and to his country is no place to stimulate a man to right thinking in chemistry or in physics or in mathematics.

So surely as you and I live you will go from your work in college with your religious conceptions changed by your life here; it may be quickened and deepened,

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with new visions of truth and tenderer realization of your relations to other men, it may be with these conceptions repressed or distorted. As your study here is to give a new orientation with respect to truth, so also will it give you a new orientation with respect to that part of truth which has to do with religion. Now my concern is that in this inevitable search of your conceptions of truth, in this orientation of yourself with respect to all thinking, you should not lose perspective. The mistake which many a student makes is the conclusion that when he begins to do his own thinking he is no longer religious, no longer worshiping the God of his fathers. So closely is our social life interwoven with certain religious forms and customs that to change the one seems like breaking with all the rest. And yet it is true to-day that a vast body, perhaps the great majority, of college men worship the God of their fathers after the way which a generation ago was universally called

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heresy, and which is to-day considered by many devout men and women, some of them your fathers and your mothers, little better than heresy. Into this company of scientific men you have come. You are to learn their methods of reasoning, which are to become your methods. In the transformation which this is sure to make in your intellectual life there is not the slightest danger to your religion or to religious truth. But there is danger that you may mistake for religion something which is not religion at all. There is a strong probability that you may think you no longer worship the God of your fathers when in fact you are worshiping Him more truthfully, more sincerely, more effectively than ever before. My brothers, there is no fact in all your life which is laden with such momentous consequences to you as the fact of religion; therefore I have thought we could spend a half-hour in no better way at the beginning of a school year, and the beginning

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for many of you of your college life, than to ask ourselves frankly the question, What is religion? For if one has once clearly understood what religion is he has gone far on the path which takes him out of the region of doubts and apprehensions and uncertainties as to his own future and his relation to the religion of his fellow-men.

And what is Religion as the man of science apprehends it? Stripped of all forms of conventional language, laying aside the imagery and the traditions which cling about the very word itself, religion presents itself to the man trained in science as nothing other than the divine life in the human soul, a life which manifests itself as all life manifests itself, by the growth which it brings forth, the divine flowers of the human heart, unselfishness, love, fearlessness, serenity, patience, service.

I do not know that this brings to your mind any clear notion of what I am trying

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to describe. Let us see if I can illustrate what I mean by a comparison drawn from one of the most common of scientific conceptions; for we men are so close to the relations and laws of matter that we are constantly forced to illustrate our spiritual conceptions by material processes.

To us men living on the earth there is only one source of energy: the sun. Darken the sun and all motion would stop, all life would disappear, every engine would cease to turn, for the coal whose burning supplies the energy for the engine is itself only stored energy of the sun. And every mill, every engine, every dynamo, every human body, merely transforms solar energy and turns it to the work of the world.

Now according to the thinking of men of science, behind all nature, behind all life, behind all our visible forms of energy, stands an infinite and eternal energy whom we call God. Just as from the sun the

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energy of sunlight streams down upon the earth and is transformed into all living things, all forms of beauty, all flowers, all motions and all the life of our planet, so also the infinite and eternal energy radiates into all the universe, the source of all energy, whether of the body, of the mind, or of the spirit. Into every human soul this divine energy falls, just as the sunlight falls upon the flowers, and every human soul becomes a transformer of that energy. To receive this divine energy into one's soul and to transform it effectively into those spiritual forms which make for justice, mercy, joy, unselfishness, serenity of mind and of life, this is true religion. If in your heart this divine transformation is not going on day by day and year by year you are not a religious man, no matter what your denominational connections or your formal professions may be. And if, on the other hand, in the soil of your heart these flowers are growing it matters

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very little whether you call yourself Catholic or Protestant, Episcopalian or Unitarian, Methodist or Christian Scientist, or if you belong to no religious organization whatsoever. It is the life in your own soul which determines whether you are a religious man, not the things that you believe or the name that you call yourself.

When the man of science who believes himself a religious man expresses this view of religion he finds himself confronted at once by at least three questions which are addressed to him by those who have approached religion from the traditional historical pathway, questions which are accompanied oftentimes with uneasiness and apprehensions. For there are few human experiences more unsettling than those which an earnest man is called upon to undergo when he reviews the grounds of his own faith and that of his fathers.

The questions are these: Does not such a conception take from religion the

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idea of a personal God and our relations as men with God our Father? Does it not wipe out the distinction between religious and irreligious men, between good and wicked men, for as recipients of the divine energy would not all men be religious men? And if this conception is true what is the practical lesson which it brings concerning the method by which a human soul may become an efficient transformer of the divine energy and therefore truly religious? I shall try to answer these questions as frankly as they can be asked, and in the same spirit in which you are taught to face the conclusions of scientific truth in scientific problems.

That this conception of religion and of God is inconsistent with the idea of a divine omnipotent person interfering directly in the affairs of our lives and of our world seems to me clear. The whole conception of the universe as the man of science sees it leads him to recognize the presence of

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God in the working of steadfast and unchanging laws. So far as his observations go, and so far as his researches into the history of mankind throw light upon the question, no instance of such interference has ever been known. On the other hand, it is against his whole conception of the orderly and just development of the universe.

But this does not mean that God has in any way been changed by the change in our conception. Nor does it follow that, because we no longer think of Him as an omnipotent person, our relations with Him as the author and sustainer of the universe have been changed. Whether we think of God as the infinite and eternal energy which is immanent in the universe, or whether we think of Him as God our Father, it is still true that the way to know Him is the same, and that He is not far from every one of us. The method by which we are to establish and freshen our

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acquaintance, and even our communion with Him, is a matter in which each human soul must seek its own way, just as each human soul must be its own transformer of the divine energy. Of what this communion is I shall hope to speak to you again. What I wish to say now is that the man who finds that his reason leads him to accept the scientific view of God does not truly accept a spiritual relationship less rich, less sincere, less helpful than he who thinks of God as a Father and as governing directly and arbitrarily the affairs of his own life and of his own world. Do not for one moment let yourself believe that, if you find the traditional historical conception of religion impossible, you have thereby ceased to be a religious man. Millions of devout souls have found Him, some with joy and some with pain, in the older way, and millions more are to find Him, it may be with greater joy and less anguish of mind, with a heartier optimism, in the newer way.

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As to the second objection, that such a conception wipes out the distinction between religious men and those who are not religious, my reply is that this distinction ought to be wiped out. There is no such dividing line amongst men. No greater wrong has been done to human kind than that by which a tradition has been gradually built up, under which certain men are recognized as religious because of belonging to an organization, while others are counted as lacking religion because they do not belong to an organization. Into all human souls the divine energy is poured freely and impartially; all men are religious in greater or less degree, and no dividing line separates one from another. We are all God's creatures.

As the radiant light of the sun falls upon our earth each plant takes up the waves of vibrant energy after its own ability. In one plant this energy is transformed into the beauty of the rose, in another into the fruit-

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fulness of the corn, and in still another this same energy is transmuted into the deadly poison of the nightshade. In some such way the spiritual energy radiated into each human soul is there transformed into human character and human action. In one heart it is transmuted into justice and mercy and truth, in another into selfishness and greed and lust. Or, rather, in most human hearts these flowers of love and hate, of service and greed, of mercy and cruelty, grow side by side just as the rose and the strychnos in the same soil are transmuters of the same sunlight. There is no human heart so black but that some flower of religion will grow there.

I remember many years ago, in trying to find my way across a wild range of the Rocky Mountains, coming suddenly, near the summit, upon one of those singular and dangerous quagmires which are sometimes found in that region even at high altitudes. The place seemed dry and safe

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enough to the eye, and presented the only ready egress from a mass of fallen timber. My horse hesitated to try it, for the mountain horses have good reason to dread those terrible black pits in which a man or an animal is sometimes entirely swallowed in an astonishingly brief time. On my urging, however, he plunged forward, and at the first step the dangerous nature of the bog was evident. In an instant he had sunk to the shoulders, and the treacherous character of the place could be seen by the shaking of the whole mass for yards around like a huge bowl of ugly black jelly. How he got out I have never quite known, but three minutes later we stood on firm ground, gazing down at the black muck of the pit from which we had just escaped. As I looked I saw growing out of the very heart of the ruck a mountain flower, white, innocent, pure. It was a type of the human heart. For there is no human heart so black, so foul, so bar-

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ren, that in its soil some divine flower of love or devotion does not grow. There is no human soul which is so poor a transformer that it does not convert into love or service some of the spiritual energy whose vibrations it receives. As we are all God's creatures, so truly are we all religious men.

One word, finally, as to the practical influence of this conception upon our individual lives. And here those who accept the scientific conception of the universe come back to join hands with those who are seeking God in another way. For whether one thinks of Him according to the one conception or the other, whether we think of Him as the infinite and eternal energy showing itself in all law, all order, all nature, or whether we think of Him as a Father, the way to Him is the same. There is no way to become a religious man in the truest sense, there is no way to become efficient transformers of the

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divine energy except to open our hearts to those forces which make for righteousness, just as the flower turns to the sunlight. The scientific conception contains no new formula, it simply strips away many useless and obsolete ones. He who believes religion to be the most profound interest for him will seek more and more to transmute the divine energy in which he shares into the things which make for spiritual life, and less of this energy into the things which are material. Back of our race stands the long story of the brute ancestry, from which we sprang, with its inherited tendency to selfishness, to savagery, to greed. Very slowly has the spiritual energy, that which makes for righteousness, overcome in the human heart the ancestral tendencies. The best of human souls are far from being efficient transformers of the divine energy. Those of you who are electrical engineers will recall how imperfect is the transformation of energy which is effected in the electric lamp.

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We burn coal to make steam, and the energy thus generated by the heat is converted into mechanical energy, and this into electrical energy, and this finally into the energy of the light waves. But less than one per cent. of the original mechanical energy stored in the coal is reproduced in the energy of the light rays. The rest has been dissipated or used up in heat which does no work. The transformation in our individual hearts is akin to this process. Each human soul takes up the spiritual energy which comes so generously to it and transforms the greater part of it into those things which serve self-interest, passion, luxury, the things of to-day. Only the remnant is left for transmutation into those things which are spiritual and eternal. And yet slowly, century by century, the race has risen in spiritual efficiency. And he who knows best the story of this rise will face with renewed courage the problem of his own spiritual life. The practical problem

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to which you and I will address ourselves is the problem of greater spiritual efficiency, the problem of transforming more of the divine energy into unselfish things, and less into those things which are material. In proportion as we do this we become religious men. And in just such proportion as we succeed, in just such proportion do we realize that we are coming into relations with that God whom our fathers worshiped, even though we do this after the way which they called heresy. And the man who has come to a realization of this in his own heart and soul has already ceased to fear that he has lost his religion, or that he ever can lose it.

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III

THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

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THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." — THE APOSTLES' CREED.

ONE of the singular facts in the history of mankind is that the questions which have divided men in religious matters have been in nearly all cases questions about the science of religion, about the formulæ of faith, about the authority of religious organization, not questions about religion itself. And even in our day it is continually necessary to draw attention to the difference between religion and the efforts which men have made to formulate it.

Some time ago I passed through a chemical laboratory where a teacher was explaining to a class a common chemical reaction. The reaction itself was going on in a retort on the table, while on the blackboard was written the conventional for-

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mula which in the science of chemistry is used to describe the reaction. It so happened that the instructor had made a mistake in writing the formula; instead of CO_2 he had written CO_3. But this made not the slightest difference in the reaction which was going on in the flask.

Now the science of religion, which we call theology, has some such relation to religion itself as the chemical formula has to the actual chemical reaction; some such relation as the science of botany has to the living flowers; some such relation as the science of astronomy has to the everlasting stars. This science of religion is important. It is of tremendous significance to the race and to the individual that we should formulate clearly and fairly our thinking with respect to God and the life of man with Him, but this science is of very small importance in comparison with the life itself. And it is of the greatest moment that you distinguish between

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religion, which is the divine life in the soul of man, and theology, which is merely the attempt to formulate our thinking with respect to that life. The great religious quarrels which have rent the world have come in most cases from the attempt of men to impose upon other men, not their religion, but their science of religion.

The student of science who concerns himself with any thoughtful philosophy of life will not only question himself as to the religion in his own heart, but he will desire to know the scientific form of thinking with respect to religion. At the beginning of any serious study of the matter there arises a fundamental question. Has the thinking of scholars so far crystallized as to give a fair groundwork of scientific truth which expresses the experience and observation of men in regard to religion? Is theology a science, in other words, in the sense in which we use that word in speaking of other sciences?

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As one studies the history of the Christian Church he finds that at various epochs in its history and by various bodies of men efforts have been made to reduce to definite form the conclusions of men concerning religion. Amongst the most famous of these are the Nicene and the Apostles' Creeds, both of the fourth century, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England in 1563, the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647, the expression of the belief of the Presbyterian Church, and the Twenty-five Articles of the Methodist Church. These are some of the formulæ which have been devised by men to explain their religious thinking. They belong to the science of religion.

The student of science is early brought to understand that the term science is used in widely different senses. Sometimes it is qualified by the word exact, as indicating a science in which the laws of the phenomena are so relatively simple and so easy

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of mathematical demonstration that the problems of the science may be solved with certainty and exactness. For example, in the science of astronomy the laws and the phenomena of planetary motion are so completely known that they may be made the subject of exact calculation, and two astronomers with the same data will eventually reach the same conclusion. A man's results may be for the moment unlike those of his fellow workers, but in such cases differences of opinion are easily adjusted. A renewed testing of observations or of reasoning process will show that somebody was in error.

Again we use the word science to indicate the collection and correlation of facts with regard to a certain set of related phenomena when knowledge of their fundamental laws is still wanting. Meteorology, for instance, is hardly more than a vast collection of undigested observations, from which a few generalizations have been

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drawn. The difficulty of exact prediction here arises wholly from the extent and complexity of the facts. The day is certainly far distant when meteorology will become a science in the same sense as astronomy or chemistry, but in theory there is no reason why that day should not come.

Finally, the word science is used to cover certain fields of study where the facts are not only complicated but dependent upon the individual point of view. Thus in the study of politics all the data are affected by the personal relations and prejudices of those who furnish them.

Now it requires little consideration to show that the science of religion is not an exact science. The chemist, whether he be English, Italian, or Russian, will describe a chemical reaction by the same formula. The theologians of England, of Italy, and of Russia will use vastly different formulæ in their respective sciences of religion. The

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science of religion can scarcely be compared to meteorology (which is a science in the forming), because in religion the human element enters so powerfully. It is more akin to the group of sciences which deal with the relations of men with each other, the social and political sciences. The formulation of thought in religious science has gone on, at least until a very recent day, under a pressure unknown in any other science: that is, the pressure of a belief on the part of nearly every worker in the science that his own soul's salvation was intimately connected with the formula which he devised and advocated. The discoveries and the formulæ of the great scientists like Newton or Pasteur come to us in a form in which any follower who desires to do so may repeat and verify the steps. The work of the great theologians like Athanasius and Augustine has more resemblance to that of the great artists: visions of truth as seen by great souls, but

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subjective, not such as may be tested and proven by those who follow.

Let us consider for a moment the oldest of these efforts to which I have referred, the Apostles' Creed, which is to-day the formula of Christendom.

The noble sentences of this creed have been in the mouths of most of us from our earliest recollections. It is interwoven with our tenderest memories. And yet it is essentially a scientific rather than a religious paper, for it undertakes to give in formal specific terms the results of man's thinking with respect to God and the relations of men with Him. Perhaps there are few of us who are equipped to examine this paper as a scientific formula. We may at least note that the fundamental conception contained in the first words of the creed is not very far away from the scientific conception of to-day. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth," is an expression of man's experience and

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conviction which is not so very different from Mr. Herbert Spencer's generalization that "We are ever in the presence of an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." It is true that in the first expression God is referred to as a Father, but the idea of an Almighty Father, the Maker of the Universe, is scarcely less impersonal than that of the infinite source of all our thoughts and energies. This generalization that God exists and that in Him we live and move and have our being is, I believe, as truly the expression of the scientific thought of to-day as it was of the scientific thought of the fourth century.

Does the same statement hold of the other articles of this creed? Can the man of science accept them as well? If we agree that religion is a divine life in the human soul, is that life dependent upon the acceptance of these beliefs? Does our adherence to the doctrine of the Trinity or the remission of sins or the resurrection of

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the body freshen that life and cause it to blossom into the fruits of love and mercy and service? In a word, is an acceptance of these doctrines of the creed a necessary or important part of religion?

All men who study and read will find these questions at some time or another lying squarely across the path of their intellectual growth. Some go around them, some rush at them as if to sweep them down, some answer them with searchings of heart. There is the youth who means as yet to evade moral issues. He has somewhere heard that the doctrines of the church have been entirely disposed of by somebody, and he welcomes an attack on the conventional theology. He is ready to dismiss all such questions as obsolete. There is the serious man — he may be a scientific man, or at least a scientific man in the making — who believes that much of the older theology is out of date, but who feels genuine uneasiness at the fear that there

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may be a practical mistake in the modern criticism or a real loss to the world by removing restraints which have made for righteousness. And there is the man who accepts more or less firmly the formula of the creed, but who wishes to be fair. He deplores modern unbelief, but recognizes it as an apparently necessary danger of any sort of higher education, and asks only what the higher education has to offer in return for the old faith. To him the scientific conception of God as the infinite and eternal energy seems vague and shadowy in comparison with his thought of God as a Heavenly Father. The statement that religion is to be lived by opening our hearts to the divine energy seems to him a very indistinct and hesitating voice alongside the words, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, and the life everlasting." Are we to throw away, he asks, these definite beliefs of two thousand years and receive in return only

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the vague conception of a power behind nature and a still more indistinct direction of the way by which we are to find Him?

To these questionings and anxieties the scientific seeker for truth can perhaps give no answer which will be satisfactory to all. The best he can do is to make clear his own ground and to do this with full respect for the faith of others and due regard to his own limitations. He must recognize, too, that notwithstanding the fact that the creed is essentially a scientific paper prepared by experts after long discussions and many compromises, its significance as a scientific formula was soon overshadowed by the influence which it came to have over the hearts of men. The place which it fills to-day has little to do with its scientific origin. As we repeat the words it is not of their scientific value or even of their truthfulness that we concern ourselves. Not one in a thousand of us has spent an hour's thought on the doctrine of the Trinity or the remis-

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sion of sins or the resurrection of the body. The words are precious to us from their associations with solemn and tender scenes of our lives, from their suggestions of a Saviour of the world and the hope and comfort of a better life. Our hearts turn gladly from the somewhat cold scientific words of the first sentence to the intensely human and sympathetic figure of Christ, and we realize that it is through our emotions that this venerated creed touches us. It is this precious freightage of the traditions, the hopes, the longings of twenty centuries of which one must think if he is to sweep away the dogmas of the church as non-essentials. It is this consideration which makes the answers to the questions I have proposed equally difficult for the religious man who wishes to be fair-minded, whether he adhere to the old faith or to the new, whether his science be theology or physics.

Men's intellectual differences generally come, not from differences in intellectual

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capacity, but from difference in the point of view; and nothing is more difficult for any of us than to get a fair perspective from another man's viewpoint. The more sure one is of his own view of truth the less likely is he to estimate fairly the attempt of another who is judging the same set of facts from another point of observation. And perhaps nowhere have good and true men shown such disregard of other men's intellectual and spiritual rights (if one may use that term) as in their discussions concerning the formulæ and philosophy of religion; for these discussions have rarely been held regarding religion itself.

It is generally only by some chance expression that we are brought to realize how completely we neglect at times the standpoint of our friend in trying to impress upon him our own view of truth. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the words of a very intelligent oriental in one of the East India islands, himself a

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teacher, concerning an exposition of religion which he had just heard from a European. Speaking without bitterness but with feeling he said, "You gentlemen from Europe and America invite us to accept your religion, but you preface your invitation with the extraordinary condition that we must first forget the long religious history of our own race and the virtues which we as a people have cultivated in thousands of years of slow progress." "The position which you assume toward us," said he, "is very like that taken by an aged student of mine, for with us it is not uncommon to find students who have passed their threescore and ten. This man had labored for many years over a theory of the planetary motions, and had finally brought his theory, as he thought, to perfection, and felt it a duty to give it to the world. To him it stood for truth. He began his explanation by this preliminary statement: 'Before you can understand my theory

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you must divest yourself of all the conceptions which your mathematical training has given you.' 'Alas,' said I, 'what you ask is impossible, and beside, if I should do this, how can I test the correctness of your theory?' Would it not be possible for you Europeans to invite us into your religious fellowship without asking us to throw away all that we have learned from centuries of slow tuition under the same God who rules in Europe and America?" I never before realized what it implied when one asks a man to abandon the religion of his race to accept that of another. The sincere believer in the formulæ of the older Christian faith doubtless feels some such protest rising in his heart, even if unexpressed, when he is asked to think of religion as a simple life of the soul, independent of all formulæ and all creeds and all organizations. The two points of view are widely different. Let us try briefly to state them.

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Both the older science of theology and the modern science of evolution recognize back of nature a governing and controlling power which makes for righteousness and which we call God; but the former represented Him to men as a divine person ruling the universe by arbitrary acts and changing the circumstances of our lives at the request or need of his children, while the latter discerns in Him the sustainer of the universe and the giver of all our life, but ever working through steadfast and unchangeable laws.

The philosophy of the old theology looked upon man as a creature fallen from a high estate, morally diseased and only to be restored to companionship with God by the fulfillment of a certain plan devised for that purpose. The provisions of this plan are contained in the creeds: the sacrifice of the Saviour, his resurrection, his judgment, the Church, the remission of sins, the life hereafter. It is true also that the

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science of theology recognized what was called natural religion, but only in a secondary sense.

The philosophy of modern science contemplates the race from an entirely different point of view. It looks upon man as occupying a place in nature to which he has come by many ages of normal development. Behind him lie a brute ancestry, ages of war for existence, centuries of slow progress which have left their imprint in his physical and moral constitution; but his face is turned toward the light, and his progress is upward.

"Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?"

With this effort to make clear the differences in the points of view, I think the attitude of the general body of scientific men toward the formulæ of the creed may be expressed in some such words as these,

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so far as one of limited scientific experience may hope to voice them.

First of all, the man of science is engaged in no propaganda to uproot the faith or the convictions of other men, whether young or old. Looking upon religion as a life in the individual soul, he is happy to see that life made fruitful by any means which the individual finds to nourish it. For himself he must regard that life as a very different thing from the formulæ which are intended to define it; and, if he examine these formulæ at all, he must apply to them the same tests which he would apply in any other study, and he must be satisfied to go only so fast and so far as he can be sure of the truth. Though science has no specifics for man's spiritual salvation, it looks with perfect faith into the future, in the belief that the progress of the race is sure. It does not undertake to answer the questions of the future which are beyond our ken, but it

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points all men joyfully toward a life with God as the normal life.

It is perhaps here that the religious man of science parts company with the religious man of creed,— in the different estimate which he puts upon truth for its own sake. The result which he is able to accept may seem less definite, perhaps less comforting to the hope, but his training leads him to believe that nothing is worth while but the truth, and that its pursuit and possession form in the end their own exceeding great reward. He has a faith quite as sincere, quite as earnest, as any other believer, that along this road of truth-seeking, of open-mindedness, of modest study, lie that sincerity, that discipline, that clear vision which in the end lead to justice and mercy and unselfishness; which lead, in a word, to the growth in the soul of that life which is religion. It is a constructive, not a destructive faith. To such a man there is infinite comfort and steadying power in the

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thought that the new faith, if it does not see so far as the old, at least looks up to God with clear eyes. Unable to read the problems of the future fully, it undertakes to give no doubtful solution, but trusts that solution without fear to the power which has brought us up out of the baser life and set our faces toward the light. The man of science is profoundly hopeful. He believes in God, he believes also in man and his destiny. His faith is that voiced by Tennyson in the lines: —

> "I stretch faint hands of faith and hope
> And gather dust and chaff and call
> To what I feel is Lord of All,
> And faintly trust the larger hope."

One cannot overlook the fact that the very definiteness of the formulæ of the older creeds of Christendom appeals to something universal in human nature. A clear statement will nearly always pass for a true one. Men instinctively reach out for specifics, and nowhere so eagerly as

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in those things which pertain to health, whether of the body or of the soul. Yet there are few specifics in all nature, either for bodily or spiritual health. The ordinary human being, to live in health, must depend not upon specific medicines but upon leading a normal life in accordance with the laws of nature. He must open his lungs to the fresh air, take into his stomach wholesome food, and lead a rational life. Health follows as a result of the laws of physical being with which the individual has put himself in accord; and yet the advice to lead wholesome lives, to eat simple food, to breathe fresh air, seems so indefinite that we generally fail to discipline ourselves to undertake these things. In the same way the invitation to spiritual health, to open one's heart to the things that make for righteousness, for unselfishness, for service, seems very indefinite. It is far easier and simpler to discipline our minds to the defense or even to the ac-

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ceptance of some formula or of some specific dogma.

In the case of both the physical and the spiritual health-seeking it is a life to which the man is called: a day by day submission of his body and of his soul to the laws of the universe in which he finds himself, not a spasmodic, isolated effort. It is at this point that we find it hard to overcome the inertia of society, the inbred selfishness of our race, the pleasure of the hour. And it is always so much easier to point the way to such a life than to lead it; so much easier to try a specific for disease than to follow the laws of health; so much pleasanter to our self-complacency to talk about the religious life than to live it.

After all, the practical problem is the same to every man, whatever his philosophy of life. The difficulties of natural depravity are exactly the same as those of the brute inheritance. The chemical reac-

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tion in the retort is the same, whichever formula is used. Whether one accept the one hypothesis or the other, the problem of the individual man is to adjust himself to the world in which he lives, to lay hold of the spiritual energy which is poured out upon him, to find his own way to God and to a life with Him.

And now in closing let me say one word in the direction in which I began. I have spoken to you in regard to the science of religion, not because I thought you were interested in theology, but because I know from daily experience that you are constantly mistaking theology for religion, constantly confusing the science of religion with the divine life in the human soul, which is religion. It is as if a man mistook the chemical formula for the actual chemical reaction, the science of botany for the flowers, the science of astronomy for the stars. I have spoken in this way, not because I do not think a

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science of religion is important; I believe it is profoundly important, if it be a true science; but because I think the science is infinitely less important than the thing itself. Now to know God in your own soul and to develop from that knowledge the fruits of the spirit is religion. If in doing this you find comfort and strength and joy in a belief in the formulæ of any body of Christians, in God's name use these formulæ and these beliefs to the utmost. But if, on the other hand, you find yourself stopped by the creeds or the traditions of the body of religious men with whom you are associated, do not for one moment allow yourself to think that you have lost your religion. These things belong not to religion, but to the science of religion, a science which was framed in the early history of civilization and which has never yet caught up with other sciences. The one important thing for any human being is to develop in his own soul,

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heartily, joyfully, sincerely, the life which blossoms into forgetfulness of self and service of men, in courage and mercy and patience and serenity of mind. For these are the fruits of true religion. And when we strive to do this we approximate ever closer to the life of him our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

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IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAYER

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAYER

"Was die innere Stimme spricht,
Das taüscht die hoffende Seele nicht."

SCHILLER.

FROM the earliest history of our race men have prayed. Our oldest records concern themselves with these efforts of men to come in touch consciously with God. During this last generation, when our conceptions of the order and progress of the universe have undergone great changes, men have still prayed. In these prayers, reaching from the earliest human history until to-day, may be traced the gradual unfolding of our conception of God and our relation to Him. The nature of a man's prayer will inevitably depend on his conception of God. The scientifically trained

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mind of the twentieth century, seeing in the universe of to-day the evidences of a slow and gradual progression in accordance with unchangeable laws, and looking up to God as an infinite and eternal power back of all nature and all law, will have a different conception of what prayer means from that of the man whose spiritual training and expression lead him to think of God as a divine person dealing as an omnipotent father with his children and influenced by their requests. In view of this changed conception many devout souls ask anxiously, Is not this scientific conception of God and of nature inconsistent with the idea of personal relation with Him? Granting the new form of faith, may a man still pray, and, if so, in what sense?

Like other fundamental questions of human experience, this one reaches back to many long-distant causes and influences. To answer it one must first know what prayer is, and what it has meant to men of

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older time as well as to those of our own day.

In no way have men shown their ideas of our relation with the Infinite so clearly as in their prayers. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, a Roman Emperor and a Stoic philosopher, and one of the greatest of human souls, gives in these words his conception of prayer: A prayer of the Athenians — "Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, down on the plowed fields of the Athenians and on the plains." "In truth," writes Aurelius, "we ought not to pray at all, or we ought to pray in this simple and noble fashion."

A prayer of Jesus: "Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

A prayer of St. Chrysostom, one of the Greek fathers of the fourth century: "Grant us in this world knowledge of thy truth, in the world to come life everlasting."

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These three prayers indicate in the form and character of their petitions three great steps which humanity has taken in its effort to know and to come in touch with God. The first reflects the life and the intellectual attitude of the highest philosophy of the ancient civilization, an attitude which was calculated to show not so much the goodness of the gods as the inherent dignity of man. The Stoic philosopher, noble, dignified, just, appealed to the gods as rulers of the world for that which he felt to be justly due to men, but he endured the things the gods sent with equal calmness, whether they were good or ill. Such a prayer argued a relation with the gods at once personal and impersonal: personal in the sense of the direct action of the gods upon human affairs, impersonal in the absence of any definite conviction of their justice and mercy. Such a prayer bespoke a soul which stood fearlessly before God, conscious of its own rectitude and willing

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to submit to the decrees of the divine power, but neither asking nor expecting the support and sustenance of that faith which looks upon God as a kindly and loving father.

That which is absent in the prayer of the Stoic is found, as it is found nowhere else, in the prayers of Jesus. Here speaks a soul conscious of a life day by day and hour by hour with a Heavenly Father. Every word and act and hope is permeated by that conscious relationship, and he prays to this Father as one who cannot only sustain and help, but also take upon himself the adjustment of every human circumstance which the complexities of life present. A loving, all-powerful Heavenly Father, not only immanent in the universe and in the lives and acts of men, but ready also at the prayer of His children to change these laws and processes to compass their well-being: these are the relations and the conceptions called up by the prayer of the Son of Man.

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The words of the Greek father suggest a still different conception and a different relation. He lived in a day when the Christian faith had already in great measure supplanted Greek and Roman philosophy in the hearts of men. A Roman emperor had become a Christian and the feeble organization which had started amid such humble surroundings three hundred years before had begun to lay its hands on the government of Europe. But in the very days of power doubts had come. Men had begun to differ in their interpretations of the complicated doctrine of salvation which had been built up under the earlier fathers. To be sure, the great Council of Nice had been called together in order to quiet these differences and to furnish a definite creed of faith which should be uniform and consistent for all Christians. But this creed had been reached only after the most bitter contest, and its very language reflected the stress under which it was

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framed. Learned and devout men held widely divergent views concerning important matters of belief. In a word, the differences which present themselves when different human intellects with varying abilities and varying prejudices study obscure problems were pressing hard upon the souls of men.

A condition of unrest, of questioning, existed approximating that of to-day; a condition which was not to recur for many centuries, for intellectual differences were quickly crushed into uniformity under the iron hand of authority. Into the prayer of that day comes a questioning note. Not earthly help or the intervention of the Heavenly Father is asked, but knowledge of God's truth. It is in some such way as this that the scientific mind prays to-day: it asks in this world knowledge of God's truth, resting sure that with this knowledge all other problems are resolved.

Does this conception of God as the in-

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finite power in the universe, immanent in all life and all nature but working through law, not under the action of human-like motives and purposes, make such a prayer less possible, less helpful, less needful?

These three prayers and all others which are uttered in the privacy of a man's own soul are efforts to come into conscious relations with God. He who really prays has crossed the threshold of spiritual consciousness and come into a higher relation with the Infinite. For, whether we look up to God as a person or whether we regard Him as the infinite source of life working through everlasting laws, our touch with Him must come through our own consciousness: and it is through this higher spiritual consciousness that we reach Him. The great souls of earth have all come to great spiritual truth through entering into this higher consciousness of the soul. Socrates speaks of it as the "dæmon" (a spirit within one); Jesus as "the kingdom within you;" St.

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Paul as the "inner man." In a word, whether we have the one or the other philosophy about God, whether we accept the one view or the other of His relation to us, we only enter into conscious relations with Him when we cross the threshold of our own spiritual consciousness. Men may be religious, they may be happy, they may be useful, and yet never rise into this spiritual consciousness, never pray in this sense.

Let us try to illustrate. For a long time the world looked upon light as a substance simple in its nature. We know now that light is composite, and that it is the result of vibrations from the source of all our physical energy, the sun. These vibrations are brought to us in the form of waves in the ether which fills all space, and their effect on our eyes will vary with the length of the waves and the consequent rapidity with which they reach our eyes. When the ether waves are fifty thousand to the inch they make upon our eyes the impression

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of violet light; when they run about thirty thousand to the inch they produce the impression of red light; and all our sensations of color lie between these two limits. Waves slower than the red and faster than the violet produce no effect on the eye. And yet we know that there are vibrations which lie below the red and above the violet which, falling upon the eye, give no vision, and are yet full of energy. Some such analogy holds in our minds. Our conscious every-day relations lie within a limited range. That which we see and recognize with our senses and which forms the bulk of our every-day experiences does not include all the spiritual energy of which the soul is capable. Below the threshold of our ordinary consciousness, as we well know, lies a consciousness of another sort, of which we know little, such as the consciousness of sleep, for example. Just so, also, above the ordinary every-day consciousness lies a superlintral region of the

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human soul, like the ultra-violet part of the color spectrum. Into this higher spiritual consciousness we rise only by that supreme effort of the soul by which a man may come to know his own soul's better self and the best to which that soul may aspire. In doing this he draws near to the author and ruler of the universe, whether his philosophy of life teaches him to look upon that author and ruler in the personal or the impersonal way. Whatever our philosophy of the universe, our way of knowing God is the same: by the development of a spiritual consciousness, by so training our own hearts and minds as to raise up within us a new man; by fearlessly facing our own souls and so knowing ourselves as to grow into that spiritual power which may bring us into contact with Him. To do this is to pray in the highest sense.

This conception of the inner man, or, as Schiller has called it, the inner voice, is almost as old as our thinking. Socrates,

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Jesus, St. Paul, Marcus Aurelius, all great souls who have thought deeply on the problems of religious development have come back to it again and again. It contains the essence of any religion which is to deal with the mind, the heart, and the moral life. Does the scientific spirit tend to develop this deeper consciousness, this inner voice?

I believe profoundly that it does. More than this, I believe that, amid the rush of our modern life, amid the distractions of incessant occupation, in the confusion of men's minds concerning right and wrong, the spirit of scientific truth-seeking is the very note which the inner voice most needs to sound, and which we men of to-day are prone to neglect.

We have become accustomed in these last years to a measure of personal and official dishonesty which is utterly demoralizing. Well-meaning men go wrong morally, in their intellectual judgments, in

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practical matters, and they excuse themselves for a refusal to listen to the inner voice on the ground, "What I have done is as nearly right as was necessary." These moral compromises form the cogs in the machinery which connect good men with worse, and it is astonishing to find how simple is the machinery and how few links are needed to reach from the honest business man to the dishonest promoter, from the high-minded public officer to the political grafter. Into this atmosphere of compromises, of shiftiness, of uncertainty, the voice of science comes with the word, "Nothing is worth while but the truth; make no compromises with yourself, accept no half-truth; do not delude yourself into thinking you are acting from one motive when you are really prompted by another; do not lie to yourself; if you are not strong enough to be righteous, at least be intellectually sincere." If, among the distractions of our lives, we are to give

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any opportunity to the inner spirit to be heard, this invariable, uncompromising attitude to truth is an essential.

In bringing this message to the individual soul the science of our day is sounding the highest ethical note of which men are capable; and he who disciplines his conscience to heed it is already giving heed to the highest spiritual consciousness into which it is his privilege to enter: he is entering already into communion with Him who is the author of his spiritual life.

And, whether communion with Him means a direct communion with a personal spirit or whether it means a communion with our better selves, it comes in either case through the medium of our personal spiritual consciousness. He who will know Him must first know himself, must first face fearlessly and fairly the questions of his own soul, must have so developed his heart and mind to higher things that he may have spiritual consciousness, and a

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communion with the spirit which is in every man. It is the knowledge of this inner spirit which shall lead us surely to higher spiritual truth.

It seems, therefore, clear to me that, in the sense in which I have used the words, all serious men, whatever their intellectual training, must pray, not, perhaps, for material help, not in expectation that the laws of the universe shall be changed at their request, not even primarily for strength to live rightly and justly, but as the supreme effort of the human soul to know God. And whether that which we call prayer be a direct communion with Him as our Heavenly Father, or whether it be a communion with our higher consciousness which is in touch with Him, in either case the time can never come when a human soul will not rise from such communion purified and strengthened, with new hope and new patience, and with a more serene view of his own duty and his own future.

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OUGHT A RELIGIOUS MAN TO JOIN A CHURCH?

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OUGHT A RELIGIOUS MAN TO JOIN A CHURCH?

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." — ST. PAUL.

THE history of the Christian Church and of the process by which it has come in our day to be represented by almost countless sects holding widely varying religious beliefs is a part of the story of the rise and progress of our race. Starting with a small group of devoted and religious men who represented no compact administration, the church gradually assumed a complex organization. With the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century Christianity became the accepted religion of the most powerful nation in the world. Gradually the Christian Church drew into its fingers the reins of civil government, and its

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organization changed character to enable it to deal with these new powers. For a thousand years it ruled the civilized world. Finally came a reaction. Men came back to the idea of earlier Christianity that it was the business of the church to concern itself with religion, not with civil rule. Out of the conflict which this reaction brought were born other forms of religious organization antagonistic to the power and influence of the mother church. This differentiation into sects has gone on until to-day the Christian Church is represented in the world by so many sects that it would be difficult to name them. They vary in creed from a strict and formal adherence to the authority of the church and its dogma to an association of men and women bound by no formal creed and associated with the purpose of the advancement of religion by their common efforts. In its most highly organized branches the Christian Church to-day still claims the

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right to rule and govern the world. In its youngest and most liberal divisions it does not even ask the acceptance of a creed. From amongst all these churches one may perhaps find none which agrees wholly with his own views, but he may certainly find one which approximates to them, and withal a very large liberty of belief and of action. A religious man — one who believes that religion is a life, not a profession, one who seeks to nourish in his own heart the things that make for truth and justice and mercy — such a one will naturally be concerned as to whether he ought to become a member of one of these organizations. Will his spiritual life be quickened thereby? Will it afford him an atmosphere in which the energy of the soul will be developed along true lines? Will it help to bring his life in touch with the religious life of other men so that both they and he may be helped? Is it his duty to join a church?

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It is evident to any student of the history of the church, or to any observer of the organizations which exist among us today calling themselves churches, that they have the advantages and the weaknesses of other human organizations. Much of what the churches do commends religion to men; a large part of that which they do has but little effect either for or against religion; and a considerable part of what the churches do unfortunately discredits religion.

If religion is a life, it is a life springing up in the individual soul. It belongs essentially and primarily to the individual. There is perhaps no other form of human development which lends itself less easily to the purposes and the machinery of an organization than that divine life in the individual human soul which we call religion. This life in the soul and its development is essentially individualistic. It may be quickened or refreshed or repressed by

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the contact with other individuals, but it does not lend itself to organization; it cannot be promoted by administration. And this has always been one of the weaknesses and the dangers of religious organizations: that the machinery of organizations, once provided, has in nearly all cases been turned to the advancement of something other than religion. It is very difficult to use the power of an organization so as to develop in the hearts of the individuals comprising it mercy and love and reverence; but it is very easy to put the organization back of a dogma which touches the imagination or the interest of those concerned. From the very nature of religion and from the qualities inherent in human nature the organization called the church has lent itself far more easily to dogma than to love, far more readily to theology than to religion, far more successfully to the upbuilding of the power of the organization than to the advance-

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ment of truth. Individual religious life was what Jesus sought to kindle. He originated no organization; though he criticised the church of his day, he never left it. His mission was to lead men to God so that they might lead their own life with Him. It was inevitable, perhaps, that amongst his followers should be developed in course of time a compact, effective organization. But this organization could not take the place of the spiritual leadership of a truly religious soul, and it lent itself only too well to human ambition and human vanity. To wrest from its hands the power of civil government took centuries of strife and cost countless lives. This battle has been fought and settled in most civilized countries. Where the question still survives it marks the recrudescence of a mediæval conflict in the minds of men: a conflict which will in the end terminate only in one way. To-day, to the great benefit of both the state and the

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church, our two most complex human organizations, the latter no longer claims the right to interfere in civil government. To-day no man will think of the church, at least in our United States of America, except in its religious purpose.

That the church is not indispensable to the perpetuation and progress of religion seems clear. Its inefficiency as a religious agency is the most evident part of its history. It does not seem impossible that religion among men may some day be so developed that the church as a formal organization may be transformed; it may come to occupy toward theology some such attitude as the Chemical Society occupies toward chemistry, or some other agency may take its place.

Yet the imperfections and limitations to which I have alluded make no answer to the questions which I have asked. The fact that the church has been in many respects cleared of the superstitions of a

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thousand years, that it no longer claims, in many of its branches at least, the obedience of an absolute authority, that it admits mistakes and weaknesses, is an evidence of increasing sincerity and of a higher fitness.

Furthermore, when the man of scientific training considers the organization of the church as it stands to-day, he will, if he follow the scientific method, be less interested in the historical consistency of the claims of the church than he will in that which the church at present represents. For example: it would be a difficult matter to trace a logical connection between the simple teaching of Jesus and the claims of the Roman Pontiff to temporal sovereignty over certain sections of Italy. Such an inquiry is interesting and of value; but it is in a certain sense academic, and ought not for a moment to blind the eyes of an intelligent man to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is to-day one of the great organized moral forces which make for law

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and order and righteousness. One cannot disregard, if he would, the place which the church has come to play in our larger social and political life. And this is a consideration which very young men are inclined to place in altogether too small a perspective. Few of us are commissioned to reorganize society, or to recast its social, religious, or political divisions. For most men the greatest usefulness lies, as does the greatest happiness, in doing their work in the world in harmony with the organizations which society has slowly adopted, and in supporting through these such reforms as commend themselves to their judgment.

That which we call Christianity to-day means different things in its organized form in different countries. It no longer means, and has never meant since the church became an organization, a true reflection of the simple life and high spiritual ideals of its founder. Christianity, even in its organized form, is no longer a creed,

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but the visible expression of the gradually growing, gradually advancing conscience of the race; and as such it is the product of the labor of religious men both in and out of the church. Darwin and Spencer and Tyndall have helped to mould the church of to-day no less truly than Luther and Zwingle and Wesley. It is true that the expression of the spiritual ideals of an age through an organization will always fall short of those ideals in the thoughts of the great leaders. This inertia is characteristic of all organizations and need cause no surprise or resentment. Organizations never lead, men lead. Religious organizations will always be slower than religious leaders in their appreciation of truth, but this does not in the least detract from the fact that such organizations offer to us men, with our complex human nature, the way to a better fellowship and a deeper inspiration.

There is one impression which is wide-

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spread among young men, and especially among those who have been brought up in Protestant homes, which has seemed to me to work great harm in dealing with this matter. That is the impression that by remaining outside of formal church connection a man in some way escapes a certain religious and moral responsibility which he incurs as a member of a church.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. All men are religious men in the sense that the divine energy flows into all their hearts. All men are under the same obligation to turn this energy to the ends for which it is meant: that is, to the growth in their hearts of love and truth and mercy. All human beings are members of that invisible church which is sustained by Him in whom we live and move and have our being. In other words, all men are under the same obligation to be religious. To excuse one's self for doing certain things because one is not a member of a church is the veriest

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hypocrisy. The obligation to be chaste, fair-minded, unselfish, generous, reverent, helpful, is just the same for each one of you whether you belong to a formal religious organization or not. Do not hide behind any such weak lie as to suppose you absolve yourself from your obligations or your relations to the infinite Maker of the universe, or that you can escape the inevitable working of His laws by declining to join an organization which your fellow-men have set up for the study and development of these relations. The obligations and the opportunities of the religious life are upon you by the very fact of your existence. By joining a church you neither increase nor diminish these obligations; but you may affect profoundly thereby your ability to respond to the obligations, to improve the opportunities and to appreciate the joys.

There is, too, one side of religion to which the church organization ministers which the scientific man is inclined to over-

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look, or at least to rate below its true value, and that is the church's ministry to our emotional nature. Howevèr highly we may value reason, however indispensable it may be in our guidance through the world, it is after all only a part of our being. The best things of our civilization, religion, literature, art, even philosophy, spring not alone from our reason, but rise in large measure from that deep undercurrent of our being in whose sweep is carried along our loves and our hates, our hopes and our fears, our aspirations and our longings. There are tender memories and associations which cling about the offices and service of the church and minister to the best that is in us. The familiar text, the old hymn, the noble words of Jesus carry with them memories and longings which are tender and true. These emotions are not religion, and we go far astray when we mistake them for it; but none the less they form a real and true part of religion, and their

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drawings are toward those things which make for the divine life. This is the immortal office of the Christian Church, that it hands on these traditions, these hopes, these aspirations, from generation to generation. To lose this fellowship is to lose much.

On the other hand there are, I apprehend, few men of scientific training who can subscribe sincerely to belief in the creed or in the articles of faith of what are called the orthodox Christian churches. Even the fact that this profession of faith is becoming in the church itself less important, that it is in fact practically ignored by a large proportion of the clergy and laity, does not make the matter of membership in the church easier to such men. All their training in science is against that attitude of mind which permits a man or an organization to hold on to a creed or to a formula in which they no longer believe. The impression it makes upon their

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minds is very much as if the astronomer should try to fit the modern observations to the Ptolemaic astronomy. Such a position is directly in contravention of that intellectual sincerity which is the basis of all true scientific progress. To scientific men, by the very nature of their education, belief must go hand in hand with reason and right thinking if belief is to be respected. For this reason they find it clearly impossible to join a church if that act requires the profession of a creed in which they do not believe. Nor do they feel sufficiently skilled in metaphysics to decide how far the different churches may go in the nominal support of a creed in which they do not fully believe. The whole idea of a creed as a test of religious fellowship seems to them indefensible and artificial. It is a part of the science of religion — and for them it seems generally a false science — not a part of religion itself.

And yet, as one recalls his own life he

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realizes that what the church has brought to the world has been largely independent of and apart from these personal tests. As one looks back on the associations of his life, as he reads the noble words of the church service and of the church prayers, he finds that his heart stirs with the memory. There are few words in our language so closely interwoven with the best human aspirations, with the sincerest spiritual outgoings, as those services of the church which we associate with the solemn acts of life. What other words have brought comfort to so many hearts as the triumphant passages of the service for the dead? How it binds all men together to believe in one faith, one baptism, one hope. Shall the man of science deny himself and his children the joy and the comfort of this fellowship because he cannot subscribe to the creed which the church prescribes, a creed which as time goes on sits more and more lightly on the consciences of the

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leaders of the church? It is this question which the religious man of scientific training and habits of thought finds it difficult to answer, and the nature of the answer will depend not alone on the intelligence and intellectual honesty of the man, but also on his general philosophy of life and the part which his emotions play in that life. Here is Louis Pasteur's answer: —

"There are two men in each one of us: the scientist, he who starts with a clear field and desires to rise to the knowledge of nature through observation, experimentation, and reasoning, and the man of sentiment, the man of belief, the man who mourns his dead children and who cannot, alas, prove that he will see them again, but who hopes that he will, and lives in that hope, the man who will not die like a vibrio, but who feels that the force that is within him cannot die. The two domains are distinct, and woe to him who tries to let them trespass on each other in

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the so imperfect state of human knowledge." Science, he said, should not concern itself with the philosophical consequences of its discoveries. He calmly went his way in the full liberty of science, and yet living and dying in the comfort of that faith which he had learned in boyhood, and without those conflicts of the soul through which so many of his scientific brethren had to go.

A very different attitude was that of Thomas Huxley. To a mind of his quality there could be no such separation between the thinking of a man as a scientist and as a religious man. The assumptions involved in the dogmas of the church aroused not only his suspicions but all his anger at what seemed to him intellectual dishonesty. "I will," said he, "be satisfied with no half truth, I will believe no lie." And he went out to fight what he believed to be the falsehoods of religious creeds with as dauntless a spirit as ever sent crusader

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against a Moslem lance. For him to have accepted Pasteur's attitude would have been treason to the best that was in him. He died, as he had lived, outside a formal church organization, although he always gladly sought for his family and his children the associations which the church offered.

The examples of these two men are worth our study, for both were great souls, both thought deeply concerning the problems of the universe. Each answered the question of his religious fellowship and his religious faith simply, sincerely, devoutly. Both were, to my thinking, religious men.

And this brings me back to the word which I said at the beginning. Each man must answer in his own way the question of his religious fellowship. Faith is itself a great spiritual experience. To believe truly and sincerely in a man, in a principle, in God, is alone a great inspiration.

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If you find in your religious faith that which brings you comfort and help and serenity of life, rejoice in it, whether you find it in one church or another, whether you be Protestant or Catholic, Episcopalian or Unitarian, Baptist or Christian Scientist. If you find your religious life quickened by association with some body of professing Christians, do not let any formal creed stand in the way of your fellowship with them. There are few men whose spiritual senses will not be quickened, whose aspirations will not be raised, whose religious ideals will not be ripened by the fellowship with his brethren which the Christian Church offers. There are few men who are not the better for a connection with the church and for service in it. But in assuming such connection do not imagine that such membership constitutes religion; make it clear to yourself why you seek and remain in such a relation, and be sure that it means a gain in your religious life.

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And be sure of one thing more: no man is going to gain in his spiritual life by ignoring the great problems of the universe which lie before him, or by professing to believe that thing which in his own soul he doubts. There are many paths by which a human soul comes to a high religious life. Some of them lead through suffering, through service, through faith, through doubt, through patience; but there is none that leads through insincerity and cowardice.

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